DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 302 026 EC 211 823

AUTHOR	O'Neil, John
TITLE	How "Special" Should the Special Ed Curriculum Be? Experts Debate Merits of Academics, "Life Skills."
INSTITUTION	Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Alexandria, Va.
PUB DATE	Sep 88
NOTE	10p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 125 North West St., Alexandria, VA 22314-2798 ($1.00, include self-addressed stamped envelope, stock number 611-88044).
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Serials (022) -- Viewpoints (120)
JOURNAL CIT	Curriculum Update; Sep 1988
EDRS PRICE	MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*Curriculum Development; *Daily Living Skills; *Educational Philosophy; Educational Trends; Elementary Secondary Education; Incidence; *Mainstreaming; *Mild Disabilities
IDENTIFIERS	*Regular and Special Education Relationship

ABSTRACT

The newsletter issue reports on the current debate on the merits of academics versus "life skills" in the education of mildly handicapped students as well as the proposed Regular Education Initiative, a plan to better unify regular and special education. Noted are the increased numbers of students identified as handicapped with the number of children receiving services for learning disabilities increasing by more than 140% in 10 years. Also noted is the high dropout rate (over 30%) of students enrolled in secondary special education programs. Differences of opinion among educators about whether secondary level mildly handicapped students should be provided the standard curriculum or an alternative "functional" curriculum stressing daily living skills are explored. Also discussed are issues concerning the instructional fragmentation caused by pull-out programs and the need for better preparation of regular teachers. A related article reports on controversy concerning the Regular Education Initiative. Differing opinions on the effects of "pull-out" programs, the possible loss of past special education gains, and needed federal support of exploratory programs are also given. (DB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED302026

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

How 'Special' Should the Special Ed Curriculum Be?

Experts Debate Merits of Academics, 'Life Skills'

by John O'Neil

Curriculum Update
September 1988

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
125 North West Street
Alexandria, VA 22314-2798

EC 211823

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Developing Leadership for Quality in Education

ASCD Curriculum Update

September 1988

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
125 North West Street, Alexandria, VA 22314-2798
(703) 549-9110

How 'Special' Should the Special Ed Curriculum Be?

Experts Debate Merits of Academics, 'Life Skills'

By John O'Neil

Amidst the mountain of reports on the state of schooling issued by prestigious commissions and task forces during the 1980s, one major component—special education—has received scarcely a word of attention.

Ignored by report writers, the special education field nevertheless is being pushed toward major change. Recent literature ranges from calls for totally abandoning the present system that separates special from general education to assertions that more, not fewer, students might be helped through special education services. In between is a major new proposal for better integration of regular and special education so that many more "mildly handicapped" students can be served in the regular classroom (for a discussion of the "Regular Education Initiative," see pp. 4–5).

Much of the current debate revolves around what constitutes the best education for students labeled as mildly handicapped (learning disabled, educable or mildly mentally retarded, or emotionally or behaviorally disturbed). "There is a serious debate about what should be taught to mildly handicapped students," says Naomi Zigmond, professor of special education in the Department of Instruction and Learning at the University of Pittsburgh. "It's an underexamined question."

This *Curriculum Update* describes the debate over preferred curricular arrangements for mildly disabled students as well as the proposed Regular Education Initiative, a plan to better unify regular and special education that has provoked considerable controversy both within and outside the special education arena.

Photos courtesy of National Education Association

"Before we talk about the special education curriculum," however, "we need to look at who's handicapped," advises Marleen Pugach, assistant professor at the University of Wisconsin/Milwaukee. Many experts are concerned about the increase in children labeled as handicapped and the validity of the systems used to classify them.

Numbers Rising

According to the U.S. Department of Education, the number of children receiving special education through federal programs rose from 3.7 million in 1976–77 to 4.4 million in 1986–87, a 19-percent increase (see Figure 1, page 2). The number of children receiving services for learning disabilities, currently the largest category of handicap, increased by more than 140 percent, with some of that gain, experts say, coming as a result of the decreasing number of students identified as mentally retarded.

Many scholars, however, question the accuracy of identification procedures that result in children being referred to special education. Lorrie Shepard of the University of Colorado/Boulder claims that "the reality is that 90 percent of the children served are very mildly 'handicapped.' At least half of the learning disabled population could more accurately be described as slow learners, as children with second-language backgrounds, as children who are naughty in class, as those who are absent often or move from school to school, or as average learners in above-average school districts."

Continued on page 2

EC 211823

Bob Algozzine of the University of Florida says that while some students have authentic severe learning barriers, the vast majority are just behind in their classes. Other students, whose achievement levels approximate that of those labeled learning disabled, aren't placed in special education because "their behavior isn't annoying enough to the teacher."

As money allocated to reading remediation and other programs has been trimmed, adds Pugach, educators have found that "it's easier to get a kid in special education than anything else."

Dropout Levels High

It is not only the identification and placement of additional children in special education programs that worries some educators. Research on the post-school experiences of handicapped students is not encouraging. More than 30 percent of students enrolled in secondary special education programs drop out, says Eugene Edgar, an education professor at the University of Washington/Seattle, and "neither graduates nor dropouts find adequate employment opportunities." In some school districts, adds Jean Schumaker of the Institute for Research in Learning Disabilities at the University of Kansas, up to three-fourths of learning disabled students may not complete high school.

Zigmond of the University of Pittsburgh says her research shows the dropout rate for learning disabled students is "much higher than for other marginal kids", about 50 percent. She finds this figure surprising because of some of the similarities between special education and dropout prevention programs, such as an emphasis on individualization and frequent contact between students and teachers.

The difficulty that mildly handicapped students often have in keeping up academically with their peers also is daunting. Schumaker says learning disabled students are "typically the bottom-of-the-barrel kids in any school," performing below the 10th percentile in reading, writing, and math. By the time such students reach the 10th grade, their mastery of basic skills may well be only at a 4th grade level.

Further, says Schumaker, learning disabled students have difficulty generalizing skills or content learned in one lesson to facilitate new learning. "There's a huge gap between what [learning disabled students] can do and what they're expected to do," she says.

What Curriculum?

The issue of what type of curriculum will help such students to succeed in special education frequently is a fuzzy area, several experts say. Special education curriculum "is not a strong suit" of the research in the field, says Steve Forness of the Department of Psychiatry at the University of California/Los Angeles. "When we talk about curriculum, we're talking about an IEP [individualized education plan]."

Because of the commitment to the IEP, special educators "don't have the usual constraints of curriculum that most teachers have," says Zigmond. "The domains are up for grabs."

To best meet the needs of mildly disabled students, most educators say schools should offer a wide range of curricular options. Many specialists, however, have distinct preferences in what they see as the proper emphasis in curriculum for mildly disabled students in elementary and secondary schools.

At the elementary level, many special educators feel that mildly disabled students need strong reinforcement in the basic skills as well as a program that teaches students how to behave and get along with peers and the teacher. Except in the very early grades, "you can't get that in the regular classroom," Zigmond asserts.

Herb Rieth, who chairs the Department of Special Education at Vanderbilt University, argues that "the curriculum for regular and special education is largely the same" at the elementary level, except that special educators try to "break down instruction more finely" than regular educators. Randy Schenkat, a consultant working with school districts on special education, advises that schools "just use good, straightforward, direct instruction" in serving mildly handicapped students. "We don't need fancy special education curricula."

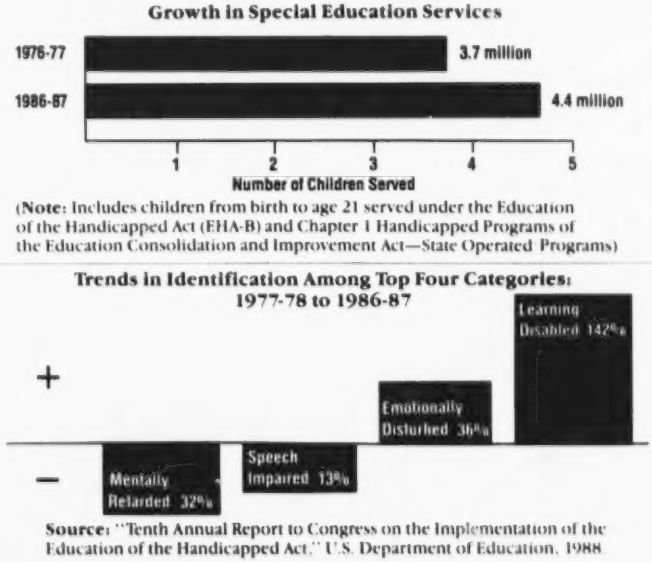
A Functional Approach

As mildly disabled students enter high school, however, some educators say the academic approach common to secondary education should be tempered with a more "functional" curriculum that will help them after they leave school. "Once they get out of school, that mildly disabled label is gone, and the youngster has to deal with the world of work," notes Rieth.

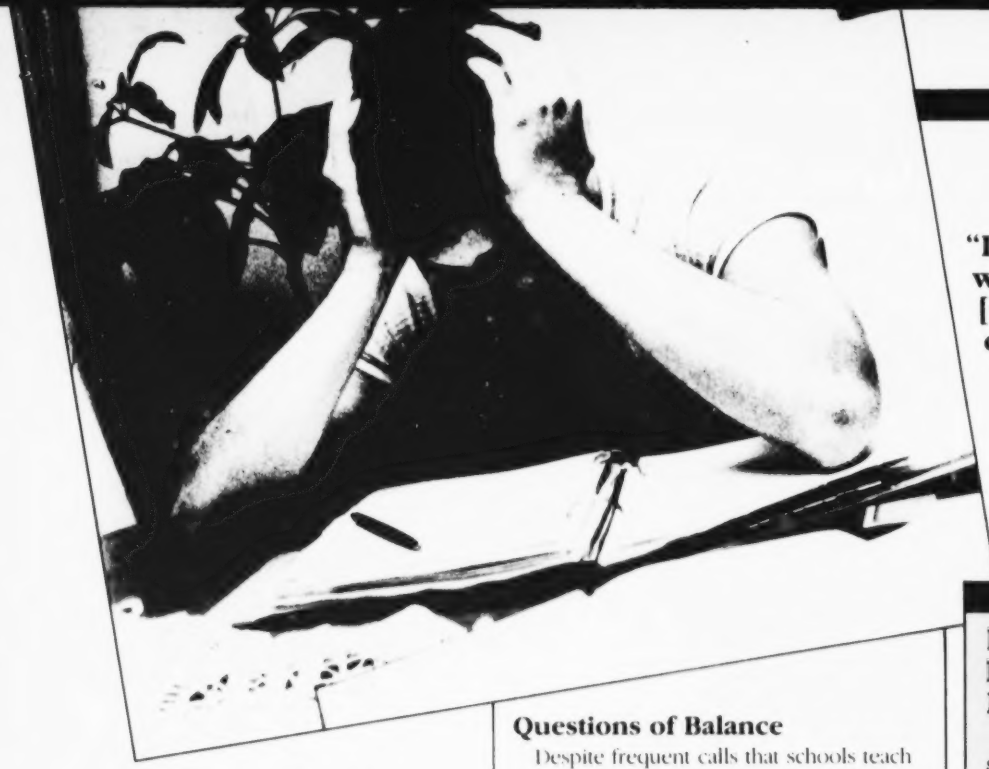
Schumaker, of the Institute for Research in Learning Disabilities, says the move toward a more content-oriented approach in high school is a difficult transition for many disabled students to make. "When learning disabled students reach the secondary grades, they lack many skills necessary for success in the mainstream curriculum."

To help such students, Zigmond favors an approach that combines academic

Figure 1


Growth in Special Education Services
1976-77
3.7 million
1986-87
4.4 million
1
2
3
4
5
Number of Children Served
(Note: Includes children from birth to age 21 served under the Education of the Handicapped Act (EHA-B) and Chapter 1 Handicapped Programs of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act—State Operated Programs)
Trends in Identification Among Top Four Categories: 1977-78 to 1986-87
+
−
Learning Disabled 142%
Emotionally Disturbed 36%
Speech Impaired 13%
Mentally Retarded 32%
Source: "Tenth Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Education of the Handicapped Act," U.S. Department of Education, 1988

The number of children receiving special education services through federal programs has increased nearly 20 percent over the past decade. Leading the way is the huge jump in the number of children identified as being learning disabled.



"I think it's tragic that we're depriving the [mildly disabled] student of standard instruction."
—Stephen Lilly

remediation in basic reading and functional math with lessons in "survival" skills or preparation for work. Rieth says vocational training for mildly disabled students must include social skills to get along with other employees and supervisors as well as practice in transferring knowledge gained in one job skill to another.

Edgar of the University of Washington/Seattle says the school reform movement's emphasis on academic requirements "will force special educators to spend even more energy on getting mildly handicapped students through the required academic courses and less time on career and vocational experiences.

"(S)econdary curricula in special education, especially in the mainstream, are nonfunctional as related to the stated goals of special education," Edgar states. "The only solution is a radical . . . shift in the focus of secondary curriculum away from academics to functional, vocational, independent living tasks."

Melvyn Semmel, director of the special education research lab at the University of California/Santa Barbara, also argues that academic skills are overstressed in programs for mildly handicapped students at the expense of more functional skills. "There is little or no evidence that the curriculum emphasis for mildly handicapped pupils over the past decade has increased the flow of members of this population into higher education or into careers which are clearly dependent on high levels of academic competency. On the contrary, the evidence appears to suggest that mildly handicapped pupils have a higher probability of failure in school and community as a function of the increased academic press in the schools and the growing competition for jobs."

Questions of Balance

Despite frequent calls that schools teach more functional skills to mildly disabled students, "right now, in many, many high schools, [the curriculum] is still fairly traditional," with academics the primary focus, Rieth says. And there are some who worry that instruction on functional skills will keep students from mastering basic academic competencies.

In an Oregon study of the views that parents, special education administrators, and special education teachers held about the high school curriculum, for example, researchers Andrew Halpern and Michael Benz discovered friction among the groups over curricular emphases. "My son's teachers have been more interested in developing his social skills, pushing him to drive, go to dances, participate in sports, date, etc., rather than working on academics, language arts, reading, and speech, which I feel are more important and more the school's province," one parent of a disabled student wrote in response to a survey question.

In reviewing the survey results, Halpern and Benz concluded that "some very basic issues remain unresolved concerning the desirable focus of a special education curriculum for high school students with mild disabilities."

Daniel Reschly of Iowa State University adds that a "strong rationale" can be made for various curricular approaches, "but determining which is most important for mildly handicapped, low-achieving students, particularly at higher grade levels, is extraordinarily difficult."

Lacking Content

Jane McGlothlin, director of special programs for the Kyrene school district in Tempe, Ariz., worries that some disabled students aren't taught the range of content

Continued on page 6

Research Shows Differences Between Mildly Disabled, Peers

Although many question the various systems that identify students as mildly disabled, Daniel Reschly of Iowa State University says even mildly handicapped students differ from their peers on a wide range of cognitive abilities that have significant implications for curriculum and instruction.

Among the differences cited by researchers:

- Information processing—Research on mildly retarded children has shown that they "differed significantly from average students" in the speed or efficiency of processing information, the knowledge base from previous learning, the use of strategies in acquisition, memory, and problem solving, and metacognitive operations.
- Motivation and attributions—Mildly retarded individuals, research has shown, "have greater tendencies to attribute success or failure to the behavior of other persons or to context variables rather than to individual competence or effort; and . . . they exhibit greater dependence on external reinforcement."

Reschly concludes that, "Despite all the systematic influences and variations in state classification criteria, there is overwhelming evidence establishing the enormous differences between students classified as mildly handicapped and students with average levels of performance on measured intelligence, achievement, and social/emotional behavior."

A solid approach for intervention with mildly disabled students, says Reschly, would include direct instruction, a focus on learning efficacy to facilitate transfer of information into new domains, and some help with adult adjustment.

The 'Regular Edu
Seeking Integration Betwee

Over the past five years, a major proposal to better unify regular and special education has gained prominence among some researchers and practitioners.

The "Regular Education Initiative," as it has come to be known, questions many of the assumptions underlying the education of mildly disabled students in special settings. As a result, it has come under heavy fire from numerous special educators.

"Most of us would opt for systems that foster cooperation and sharing rather than competition and alienation, and that provide appropriate and adaptive programs for all students," Barbara Keogh, a professor at the University of California Los Angeles, writes in a recent article in the *Journal of Learning Disabilities*. "It is easy to reach consensus on such broadly stated goals. At issue is how to accomplish them."

While most of the issues undergirding the REI are not new, the initiative received its strongest push from a booklet published in the fall of 1986 by Madeleine Will, assistant secretary for special education and rehabilitative services in the U.S. Department of Education.

Educating Students with Learning Problems: A Shared Responsibility, which discussed learning opportunities for educationally disadvantaged students and those with mild learning disabilities or emotional problems, faulted a "fragmented" educational delivery system in which some students "fall through the cracks." Will called for a system "that will bring the program to the child rather than one that brings the child to the program."

The report proposed that more children with learning problems might be served in regular classrooms if instruction were more varied and lengthier, regular and special educators joined forces in "building level support teams," and principals were empowered to control all programs and resources at the school site.

'Pull-Out' Programs

Will has attempted, with limited success, to emphasize that the REI would not mean a lessening of services to students currently identified as mildly disabled. "Decisions [about a child's placement] should continue to be made on the basis of each child's individual needs," she said in a recent speech. "The goal [of the REI] is to lessen our dependence on 'pull-out' programs. But we do not anticipate that such programs will be eliminated."

But Steve Forness, a professor in the UCLA Department of Psychiatry, cautions that some REI proponents may be underestimating the problems even mild handicaps pose for teachers and children in the regular classroom. The REI is being "interpreted as advocating the elimination" of entire categories of mild disabilities. Noting the diminishing number of students labled as mentally retarded in California, Forness says that the students left in that category "are really very impaired. They need more than just a good teacher or curriculum."

Michael Gerber of the University of California Santa Barbara adds that handicapped students "are very difficult to teach successfully. To achieve a level comparable to their peers, they require much more intensive instruction. This kind of effort is rarely possible in a regular classroom."

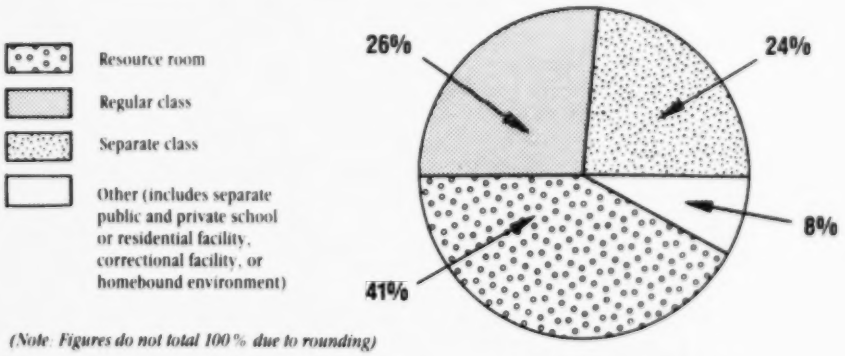
Special educators also have challenged whether regular education teachers are prepared, willing, and qualified to incorporate more students with learning or behavioral difficulties in already-diverse classrooms, given the pressures for academic excellence. "The reform movement is emphasizing more uniformity of students, not tolerating individual differences," advises Naomi Zigmond, professor of special education at the University of Pittsburgh.

Jean Schumaker and Donald Deshler at the Institute for Research in Learning Disabilities at the University of Kansas argue that "the amount of time needed to teach the required number of complex skills [for learning disabled students to succeed in regular classrooms] exceeds the amount of time that might be allocated to such instruction in a secondary content classroom where the teacher is already under pressure to teach more curriculum content as national expectations are raised."

Past Gains Jeopardized

Having battled to win the rights of handicapped children to receive needed educational services, moreover, many special educators feel the REI could result in a drop in attention to—and funding for—disabled children. Mara Sapon-Shevin of the Center for Teaching and Learning at the University of North Dakota points to a report by the conservative Heritage Foundation that says public schools "should not be required to educate those children who cannot, without damaging the main purpose of public education, function in a normal classroom setting." In a recent article in *Exceptional Children*, Sapon-Shevin suggests that Heritage's

Where Students Receive Special Education Services

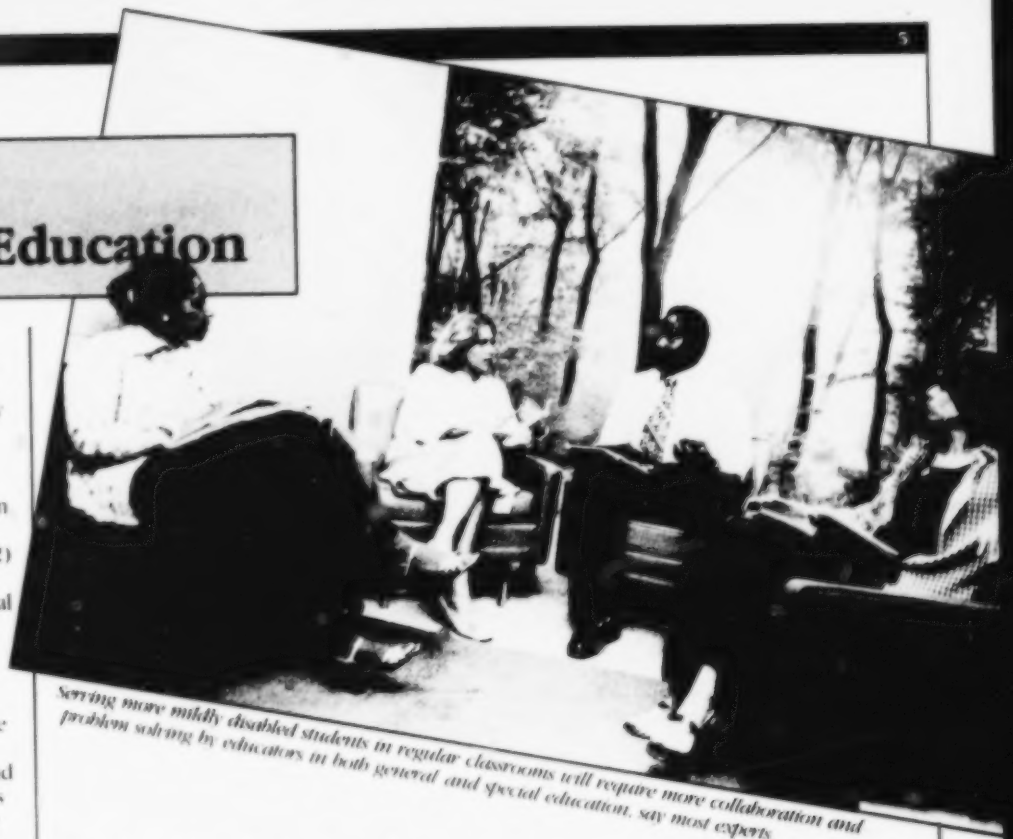


(Note: Figures do not total 100% due to rounding)

Source: "Tenth Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Education of the Handicapped Act," U.S. Department of Education, 1988

Most children receive special education services in a resource room setting

...cation Initiative': ...n Special, Regular Education



Serving more mildly disabled students in regular classrooms will require more collaboration and problem solving by educators in both general and special education, say most experts.

argument—that efforts to help disabled students should not come at the expense of other pupils—is a more explicit statement of views "presented more subtly in several of the other national reports."

Proponents of the REI, on the other hand, argue that the battle for the civil rights of disabled students was largely won through the passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (P.L. 94–142) in 1975. The legislation, they argue, has created a burdensome and complex special education system in which students are often mislabeled and pulled out of the regular classroom to receive special services of questionable merit.

"One of the strongest arguments for the regular education initiative is that the presumed differences between general and special education, particularly for students labled 'mildly handicapped,' are relatively meaningless, and thus we should remove some of the artificial barriers which have been built between the systems," says Stephen Lilly, dean of the College of Education at Washington State University.

Attempting to deregulate means taking considerable risk, as Principal Levaun Dennett of the Montlake Elementary School in Seattle, Wash., can attest. As part of a restructuring effort at the school begun in 1985, Montlake discontinued the practice of labeling children for special education or remedial services. Quickly, however, the school lost its federal funding for Chapter 1 and special education, and it has since had to make do with a patchwork of one-time grants to continue the project.

Federal Support

Temple University's Margaret Wang, Maynard Reynolds of the University of Minnesota, and Herbert Walberg of the University of Illinois/Chicago suggest a two-part approach to unifying special and regular education. They call for creating a system that "would combine methods that have a strong research record of effectiveness with comprehensive systems of instruction that have evolved from both general and special education," such as providing students with ample time and instructional support to learn essential content and frequent assessment of progress and feedback.

A second thrust would encourage federal support of states and local districts to experiment with programs to serve disabled students in the regular classroom. The Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services in the U.S. Department of Education, under Will's direction, has begun funding a variety of studies to explore aspects of the REI.

A first round of grants awarded in 1985 focused on prereferral strategies to keep students from being placed unnecessarily in pull-out programs. A second round of grants has been awarded to explore effective instructional and classroom management techniques for regular educators to better serve students with learning or behavior problems or those at risk of developing them. Adopted from special education's approach to individualizing instruction, the research projects will experiment with such strategies as changing classroom organization to increase instructional time and changing grouping patterns to enhance learning, Will says.

A third round of grants, expected to be funded this summer, will pull together prereferral and instructional strategies and fashion them into a "comprehensive building-level approach" to educating disabled students.

A Look Ahead

Notwithstanding the criticism leveled at the REI by many special educators, proponents say an educational system that better unifies regular and special education is the wave of the future.

Washington State University's Lilly, for example, says the "regulatory" nature of special education contradicts a staple of the "second wave" of educational reform—that teachers and administrators at the building site should have a greater part in making instructional and other decisions. "One need only examine the regulatory structure of special education to see that it is built on the assumption that no one can be trusted to do what is right unless they are required to do so in very specific terms."

The Holmes Group, an influential consortium of universities attempting to reform teacher preparation, also is being encouraged to consider a teacher education program that fuses regular and special education, says Marleen Pugach of the University of Wisconsin/Milwaukee. Pugach and colleagues in the Holmes Group recently recommended the "substantive and structural reorganization" of a teacher education system that is now "separate and fragmented." They also urged that the Holmes Group's call for "professional development schools," in which teachers would be trained in a "teaching hospital" setting, should reflect a unified approach to teaching all students.

"We've built in a problem by having pull-out programs and a dual system where there's no incentive to have cooperation between regular and special education," Pugach says. Adds Lilly: "I sincerely hope that many current special educators . . . will be willing and eager participants in the redefinition of services we provide to students."

—John O'Neil

they need. "We sometimes pull students out of social studies and science for so many years for help that they leave school without essential general information about their community and the world around them," McGlothlin says subjects such as science and social studies should be used for "application" of skills learned in other settings to diminish the problem.

Even at the high school level, some experts doubt that the curriculum for mildly disabled students should differ much from a school's regular education curriculum. Noting the current interest in ensuring the functional skills of secondary mildly disabled students, the University of Florida's Algozzine asks, "If those are so important, why aren't all kids learning them?"

"I think it's tragic that we're depriving the [mildly disabled] student of standard instruction," adds Stephen Lilly, dean of education at Washington State University. Life and social skills, he believes, should be taught in regular classrooms and linked with instruction to improve students' higher-order thinking.

"We've built in a problem by having pull-out programs and a dual system where there's no incentive to have cooperation between regular and special education."

—Marleen Pugach

In a widely discussed article published in the *Harvard Educational Review* last winter, Alan Gartner and Dorothy Kerzner Lipsky of the City University of New York decried a "disabling" view of handicapped students that "adversely affects expectations regarding their academic achievement. It causes them to be separated from other students, to be exposed to a watered-down curriculum, to be excused from standards and tests routinely applied to other students, to be allowed grades that they have not earned, and, in some states, to be permitted special diplomas."

Separate Classes

Many experts also cite the lack of continuity in mildly disabled students' learning when they are shuttled off to assorted separate programs.

Program Models

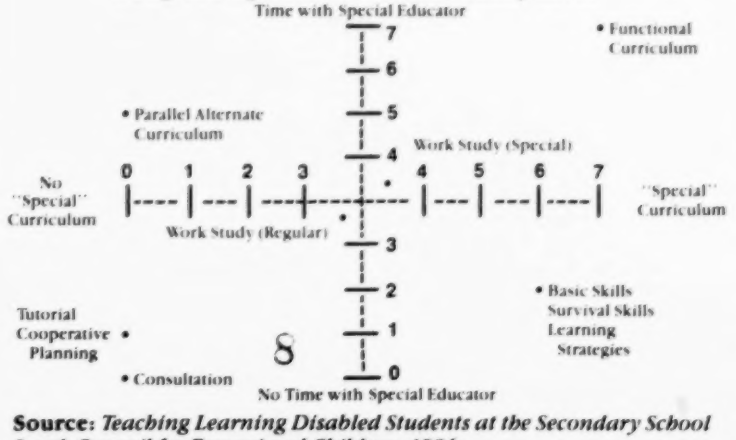
Naomi Zigmond and colleagues at the University of Pittsburgh have created a useful diagram to compare programming options for mildly disabled students in secondary schools. Although it was devised for learning disabled students, Zigmond says the program alternatives are applicable to other mild disabilities as well. The major axes of the diagram plot two variables: the amount of time the student spends with the special educator and the extent to which the curriculum for these students is "special." Both factors are major elements in the current debate over the "Regular Education Initiative," which suggests that more students, when appropriate, be served in regular classrooms.

Zigmond and her colleagues summarize program options as follows:

- Resource Room Model—Novel Curriculum. In this model, students spend one or two class periods per day with a special education teacher and the remainder in the mainstream. The resource room instruction, as opposed to the mainstream, may include **basic skills** remediation, **survival skills** lessons, and instruction on **learning strategies**.
- Resource Room Model—Tutoring. Under this approach, the resource room teacher helps the student master skills and content defined by the mainstream class. The strategy may include both a **tutorial** and **cooperative planning** between the resource room and regular education teacher to develop strategies to help the student succeed.
- Self-Contained Class—Novel Curriculum. This approach includes a **functional curriculum** to teach students skills that will be needed after high school, such as filling out a job application or becoming an informed consumer.
- Self-Contained Class—Standard High School Curriculum. The **parallel alternate curriculum**, one of the strategies used in this model, maintains the same content objectives as the regular classroom but varies the presentation or format—for example, by using film and nonprint materials.
- Consultation Model—With the **consultation** approach, the special educator works with the regular education teacher or as part of a "mainstream instructional team" to adjust instruction to help disabled students in the regular classroom.
- Work Study Model—In this model, students typically spend half of each school day at a job and the other half studying material related to job success. Whether the vocational educator or special educator provides the in-school instruction determines if the program is referred to as **work study (regular)** or **work study (special)**.

Source: *Teaching Learning Disabled Students at the Secondary School Level*, by Naomi Zigmond, Janet Sansone, Sandra Miller, Kathleen Donahoe, and Rachel Kohnke. The handbook is available from the Council for Exceptional Children for $6.50 (or $5.50 for CEC members). CEC, 1920 Association Dr., Reston, VA 22091; 703/620-3660.

Students with Mild Disabilities: Program Options at the Secondary Level



Source: *Teaching Learning Disabled Students at the Secondary School Level*, Council for Exceptional Children, 1986.

Lilly disagrees with the assumption that a placement outside the regular classroom will provide the disabled student with better and more varied learning opportunities. "Why should we assume that the special placement is the only setting in which they can have increased instructional attention?" Through the use of peer tutoring, cooperative learning, and aides or volunteers in the classroom, mildly disabled students might not need to be taken out of regular education, he says.

Similarly, McGlothlin worries that a special education placement may not always provide the structured practice needed by disabled students. "It seems to me that in our efforts to provide 'special,' we've often developed a program that was less intense—in terms of instructional time, practice time, and consisting of objectives and materials—for our hard-to-teach students than for our nonhandicapped regular classroom students."

Madeleine Will, assistant secretary for special education and rehabilitative services in the U.S. Department of Education, strongly criticized "pull-out" programs in a report suggesting better integration between regular and special education. Such programs, she wrote in *Educating Students with Learning Problems: A Shared Responsibility*, "minimize communication between special teachers and regular classroom teachers, resulting in a lack of coordination between ongoing classroom instruction and the specially designed remedial instruction. The result is that the remedial instruction does not complement or help the child with the curricula which he or she must master in the regular class."

If a different curriculum is used in special education from that in regular education, "the special education curriculum takes over," cautions Joe Jenkins of the University of Washington, with the result that the general education teacher "doesn't feel any responsiblity to teach [mildly disabled] kids to read." Jenkins and colleagues are suggesting in a paper to be published in *Exceptional Children* that special education programs be merged with other compensatory programs such as Chapter 1 to alleviate the "sense of fragmentation" associated with the pull-out model.

Staff Development

Mary Beth Fafard, associate commissioner for special education in the Massachusetts Department of Education, says staff development must be improved to help teachers develop new strategies to aid mildly disabled students in their classrooms. Formerly director of

curriculum and professional development for special education in the New York City schools, Fafard says staff development should include showing teachers how to adapt their teaching style and curriculum materials to match the abilities of disabled students.

Regular and special education teachers must join together for staff development focused on curriculum, however, Fafard stresses. "Staff development remains separate in many schools for the regular and special education teachers," she says. Ima Dunn, director of special services for the Pueblo, Colo., schools, adds that although some teachers desire more and better materials accessible to handicapped students, "it's awfully hard to get secondary teachers, especially, to make adaptations."

Besides adapting curriculum, numerous strategies have been suggested to help teachers better serve mildly disabled students in regular classrooms. With the escalating number of students referred to special education, "prereferral" strategies are becoming more popular. Pugach of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee says prereferral strategies include "informal, school-based, problem-solving teams," in which a group of teachers discuss how a teacher can help an individual student, and the "consultation" model, in which the special education teacher works directly with the regular classroom teacher to develop an intervention plan for an individual student.

Both models typically involve special educators in an integral fashion. Pugach believes, however, that regular education teachers themselves can develop the skills to avoid inappropriate placement of a student in the special education system. In a recent study of 91 teachers conducted by Pugach, teachers who were trained in peer collaboration learned to "generate a wide variety of successful individual interventions to address identified learning and behavior problems" among students in regular classrooms.

Overcoming the 'Deaf'

While such approaches appear promising, building cooperation between regular and special education teachers to help more students succeed in the mainstream curriculum faces large obstacles.

Gartner and Lipsky of the City University of New York note the existence of a "deal" between special and general education. The former asserts a particular body of expertise and a unique understanding of "special" students, thus laying claim to both professional obligation and student benefit. The latter, because of the lack of skills and resources or prejudice, is often happy to hand over "these" students to a welcoming special education system.

And while some educators push the return of more mildly disabled students to the mainstream, others are dubious that regular educators have the skills or willingness to serve them. Noting the number of national reports criticizing general education in the past decade, Barbara Keogh of the University of California-Los Angeles calls it "a strange logic that calls for the regular system to take over the educational responsibility for pupils it has already demonstrated it has failed." Given the strong differences of opinion in the field over what should be taught and in what setting, change that will significantly affect mildly disabled students is likely to take time. ■

References

On addition to interviewing many of the sources quoted in this issue of Curriculum Update, *the author used the following resources:*

Edgar, Eugene. "Secondary Programs in Special Education: Are Many of Them Justifiable?" *Exceptional Children* 53 (April 1987): 555-561.

Gartner, Alan, and Dorothy Kerzner Lipsky. "Beyond Special Education: Toward a Quality System for All Students." *Harvard Educational Review* 57 (November 1987): 367-395.

Gerber, Michael. "Bryant Calls for Change Lead to Slippery Slope." *Education Week*, May 4, 1988, 36.

Halpern, Andrew S., and Michael R. Benz. "A Statewide Examination of Secondary Special Education for Students with Mild Disabilities: Implications for the High School Curriculum." *Exceptional Children* 54 (October 1987): 122-129.

Heritage Foundation. "The Crisis: Washington Shares the Blame." *The Heritage Foundation Backgrounder*, May 11, 1984.

Holmes Group. "Special Education Poses Issues for Reforms in Teacher Education and Professional Development Schools." *Holmes Group Forum* 2 (Spring 1988): 22.

Jenkins, Joseph R., Constance G. Pious, and David E. Peterson. "Categorical Programs for Remedial and Handicapped Students: Issues of Validity." Accepted for publication in *Exceptional Children*.

Keogh, Barbara. "Improving Services for Problem Learners: Rethinking and Restructuring." *Journal of Learning Disabilities* 21 (January 1988): 19–22.

Lilly, Stephen. "The Regular Education Initiative: A Force for Change in General and Special Education." To be published in *Education and Training of the Mentally Retarded*.

McLaughlin, Jane. "Special Education in a Small School District: Past, Present, and Future." In *The Future of Special Education: Proceedings of the 1986 CEC Symposium*. Reston, Va.: ERIC Clearinghouse on Handicapped and Gifted Children, 1987.

Olson, Lynn. "A Seattle Principal Defies the Conventional Wisdom." *Education Week*, April 13, 1988, 1, 22–25.

Pugach, Marleen C., and Lawrence J. Johnson. "Peer Collaboration: Enhancing Teacher Problem Solving Capabilities for Students at Risk." Paper presented to the American Educational Research Association, April 1988.

Reschly, Daniel. "Learning Characteristics of Mildly Handicapped Students: Implications for Classification, Placement, and Programming." In *Handbook of Special Education: Research and Practice, Vol. 1*, edited by Margaret C. Wang, Maynard C. Reynolds, and Herbert J. Walberg. Elmsford, N.Y.: Pergamon Press, 1988.

Safer, Sheryl, and Mara Safer. "The National Education Reports and Special Education: Implications for Students." *Exceptional Children* 55 (January 1988): 400–406.

Schumaker, Jean B., and Donald D. Deshler. "Implementing the Regular Education Initiative in Secondary Schools: A Different Ball Game." *Journal of Learning Disabilities* 21 (January 1988): 36–42.

Semmel, Melvyn. "Special Education in the Year 2000 and Beyond: A Proposed Action Agenda for Addressing Selected Ideas." In *The Future of Special Education: Proceedings of the 1986 CEC Symposium*. Reston, Va.: ERIC Clearinghouse on Handicapped and Gifted Children, 1987.

Shepard, Lorrie. "The New Push for Excellence: Widening the Schism Between Regular and Special Education." *Exceptional Children* 55 (January 1987): 327–329.

U.S. Department of Education. "Tenth Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Education of the Handicapped Act." Washington, D.C., 1988.

Wang, Margaret C., Maynard C. Reynolds, and Herbert J. Walberg. "Rethinking Special Education." *Educational Leadership* 44 (September 1986): 26–31.

Will, Madeleine. *Educating Students with Learning Problems: A Shared Responsibility*. U.S. Department of Education, 1986.

Will, Madeleine. "Educating Students With Learning Problems: A Shared Responsibility." Speech to the Office of Special Education Programs State Directors Meeting, Alexandria, Va., April 1988.

Resources

The following national organizations may be helpful in acquiring materials for disabled students.

American Speech, Language, Hearing Association
10801 Rockville Pike
Rockville, MD 20852
301/897-5700

Association for Children & Adults with Learning Disabilities
4156 Library Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15234
412/341-1515

Association for Education & Rehabilitation of the Blind & Visually Impaired
206 N. Washington Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
703/548-1884

Association for Retarded Citizens
P.O. Box [illegible]
Arlington, TX [illegible]
817/640-0204

Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)
1920 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091
703/620-3660

ERIC Clearinghouse on Handicapped and Gifted Children
1920 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091
703/620-3660

Clearinghouse on the Handicapped
Office for Handicapped Individuals
Department of Education
330 C Street, SW
Switzer Building, #3132
Washington, DC 20202
202/732-1244

National Association of State Directors of Special Education
2021 K St., NW, Suite 315
Washington, DC 20006
202/296-1800

National Information Center for Handicapped Children & Youth
Park Place Bldg., Suite 1100
7926 Jones Brand Drive
McLean, VA 22102
703/893-6061

Orton Dyslexia Society
724 York Road
Baltimore, MD 21204
301/296-0232

Adapting Materials

When disabled students are mainstreamed in academic subjects such as science and math, educators frequently seek ways to adapt curriculum materials to meet their needs. The Council for Exceptional Children published an "issue brief" on curriculum adaptation that synthesizes information from seven projects sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Special Education Programs.

Adapting Instructional Materials for Mainstreamed Students describes eight steps to adapting curriculum materials appropriate for the entire ability integrated class. It also includes descriptions of several creative curriculum adaptation projects using microcomputers, audiocassettes, and other means. For more information about the guide, contact CEC, 1920 Association Dr., Reston, VA 22091, 703/620-3660.

Curriculum Update is published four times per year as a supplement to *ASCD Update*, the official newsletter of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 125 North West Street, Alexandria, VA 22314-2798. Telephone: (703) 549-9110 (Switchboard Hours: 9 to 5, Monday through Friday, Eastern Time).

Curriculum Update reports trends, research findings, exemplary programs, and available resources in a specific curriculum area.

John O'Neil, *Editor*
Gordon Cawelti, *Executive Director*
Ron Brandt, *Executive Editor*
Nancy Modrak, *Manager of Publications*
Al Wax, *Art Director*
Janet Price, *Asst. Mgr. of Publications*
Rene Townsley, *Associate Editor*
Julie Houtz, *Assistant Editor*

Subscriptions for this publication are included in ASCD membership, but additional eight page copies may be ordered (prepaid only) at the following rates:

Single copies	SASE and $1.00
25 copies	$12.50
50 copies	$20.00
100 copies	$40.00

Use stock number 611-88044